

CHAPTER VI

TWO THOUSAND GUNS ON THE FIRING LINE

ARTILLERY

IT was true of light artillery as it was of rifles, that the United States had, when war was declared, a supply on hand sufficient to equip the Army of 500,000 men that proponents of preparedness had agreed might have to take the field in the event of a large emergency. There were 900 pieces of field artillery then available. The gun on hand in largest quantities was the 3-inch fieldpiece, of which we had 544. As 50 of these are required for one division, this was a sufficient number to equip 11 divisions. When the emergency arrived, however, it was far larger than had been foreseen even by those who had been arguing that we needed an army several times as large as the one we then had. The initial plans called for the formation of 42 divisions, which would require 2,100 3-inch fieldpieces almost at once. In addition, these divisions would require for active operations in France a repair shop reserve, a replacement reserve, and a stream of guns in transit which would increase their initial requirements to about 3,200. To keep this army going would require only a production of about 100 guns per month, but to get it going within a reasonable length of time would have required a productive capacity of 300 or 400 guns per month, depending on how soon it would be imperative for the army to be in action. The great difference between the manufacturing output necessary to get an army going quickly, and that required to keep it going after it has been equipped, explains the enormous industrial disadvantage suffered by a nation which enters a war without its stocks of military supplies for initial equipment already on hand.

To meet the situation the decision was made in June, 1917, to allot our own guns to training purposes and to equip our